

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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S E C R E T BANGKOK 5548

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS SECDEF, CINCPAC, MACHTAI, PACAF,
13AF, AND 13AF ADVON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TH

SUBJECT: USAF UNIT RELOCATIONS IN THAILAND

1. IN BANGKOK 4931 I OFFERED SOME SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE TIMING OF MOVEMENT OF VARIOUS MILITARY UNITS AS A RESULT OF OUR RECENT DECISION TO REDUCE OUR PRESENCE IN THAILAND. THESE WERE DESIGNED SOLELY TO GET ON THE RECORD A VIEW ON ONE WAY TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM AND TO SOLICIT WASHINGTON'S THINKING IN ORDER THAT WE MIGHT, AS WE ARE COMMITTED TO DO, CONSULT WITH THE THAI, PARTICULARLY ABOUT THOSE UNITS WHICH WILL BE MOVED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IF WE DO NOT DO THIS BEFORE THE THAI LEARN OF OUR INTENTIONS BY OTHER MEANS, WE WILL LOSE PART OF THE POLITICAL GAIN WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE AND ENDANGER OUR CONTINUED GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIPS.

2. I AM CONCERNED THAT THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. ON APRIL 3, AS PART OF MY PROGRAM OF VISITS TO ALL U.S. ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND, I WENT TO TAKHLI AND KORAT. AT KORAT I COULD NOT HELP BUT NOTICE THAT REVETMENTS WERE BEING TORN DOWN TO MAKE ROOM FOR F-111'S FROM TAKHLI. THIS IS, OF COURSE, EQUALLY NOTICEABLE TO THE THAI, WHO ARE QUICK TO ACCUSE US OF DOING OUR THING IN THAILAND WITHOUT

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CONSULTING THEM.

3. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE U.S. MILITARY IN KORAT HAVE HAD SOME INSTRUCTIONS THROUGH MILITARY CHANNELS OR THEY WOULD NOT BE TAKING THE ACTIONS ALREADY UNDER WAY. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT I BE CUT IN ON THIS TRAFFIC IN ORDER THAT WE CAN KEEP OUR PLANNING AND OUR ACTIONS REGARDING MILITARY WITHDRAWALS IN PHASE WITH MY POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WITH TOP THAI AUTHORITIES. WITH CHANGES ALREADY BEING MADE IN REVETMENTS IN KORAT AND RUMORS RIFE ON THE OTHER BASES, IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT I BE ABLE TO DISCUSS OUR INTENTIONS WITH THE RTG IN A MANNER THAT CORRESPONDS WITH DOD PLANNING. MUCH IS AT STAKE AND IT WOULD BE MOST UNWISE TO TELEGRAPH OUR INITIAL REDUCTIONS THROUGH OVERT ACTIONS UNTIL OUR WORKING LEVEL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE RTG TAKES PLACE.

4. ALTHOUGH ORDINARILY I WOULD NOT COMMENT ON A MILITARY UNIT LOCATION PLAN, AT KORAT IT DID STRIKE ME THAT WE MIGHT BE SPENDING SUBSTANTIAL SUMS OF MONEY TO SQUEEZE IN AND PROVIDE REVETMENTS FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF AIRPLANES FOR WHAT WILL PROBABLY BE NO MORE THAN A YEAR OR TWO, AT A TIME WHEN U-TAPAO WILL BE RELATIVELY EMPTY.

I RECOGNIZE THERE MAY BE VALID REASONS FOR EXTRA LOADING AT KORAT TO WHICH I AM NOT PRIVY, BUT IN A PERIOD OF AUSTERITY IN BOTH OUR MAP AND AID PROGRAMS THE EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR TEMPORARY REQUIREMENTS MIGHT BE SUBJECT TO CRITICISM.

KINTNER

NOTE BY OC/T: BANGKOK 5548 NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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